

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 67

**Ralph Minichiello, Superintendent
Ronda Geisler, Director of Special Education**

Final Report

May 8, 2001

Visit Conducted on:

February 21-22, 2001

Team Members:

Nancy Brogden, Chairperson
Nancy Corbett, Speech Specialist
Deb Gouveia, Special Educator
Janet Gross, LD Specialist
David Loranger, English Teacher
Maxine Mosley, Guidance Counselor
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Students with Disabilities

(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions for each school)

Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 67

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted in SAU 67 comprised of the following schools: Bow Elementary, Bow Middle School and Bow High School. The visiting team met on February 21 and 22, 2001 in order to review the status of special education services provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of application materials, teaching certification of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Superintendent, Director of Special Education, building principals, regular and special education teachers, and related service personnel as time and availability permitted. Team members also observed students and programs, and conducted parent interviews on site and via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had the full cooperation from school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on December 15 and 16, 1992*

There were no significant issues identified during the previous special education program approval visit. At that time, new forms and a new Local Special Education Plan had just been developed. To their credit, the district has recently redone the district's special education plan and forms to comply with the new federal regulations. It is apparent that the district has addressed the few minor compliance issues identified from the previous visit. At the time of the previous visit, Bow students attended Concord high School for grades 9-12. They now have a spacious high school building with state of the art technology.

Overall, SAU 67 had made significant growth in program improvements, including many innovative programs, since the 1992 compliance visit. The attitude of staff is enthusiastic and the collaboration of all parties is strong. Each building conveys a warm and caring attitude for children to learn, and includes strong programming for all children. Exemplary inclusionary practices are evident in each building and were mentioned as commendations for each of the three buildings. All students have maximum access to the general curriculum. There is high use of technology throughout the district and parents have access to teachers through voice mail, e-mail and standard methods of communication. The visiting review team would like to recognize and reinforce the philosophy, vision and goals each school is working towards and commend them for their support of quality services to all children.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

It is clear that issues from the last visit have been addressed. While space is not an issue at the high school, it is clearly a concern in the elementary and middle school buildings. Staff has creatively used every nook and cranny for instructional purposes. However, teachers are instructing children in hallways and converted closets, which is not the best environment for students to receive FAPE. Attempts are underway to build a new facility to house fifth and sixth grade students, which should resolve this problem.

A new curriculum for the Life Skills substantially-separate program at the high school has been developed. Two programs, "For Today" and "Everyday", are for students requiring credits to graduate but for whom no general education class meets their needs. While the curriculum "skeleton" is in place, assurances need to be made that there are lesson plans for students in these courses and that IEPs are not being used as curriculum.

In an attempt to provide services to all children who need them, the district has identified children in three categories. There are students receiving services under Individual Education Plans, under Section 504 plans and under "student at risk" plans. Special education staff are case managing all of these children. While they are to be commended for providing services to such a large group, the burden of paperwork and the number of children on their caseloads is extraordinarily high. One special educator case manages 40 students, only 8 of whom have IEPs. The Director of Special Education, Ronda Geisler is praised for her leadership and dedication. She also wears many hats that are not special education related and her job appears to be overwhelming. She chairs a CORE team meeting bi-weekly at the elementary school, attends all initial meetings as well as most the more complex IEP meetings. The team noted that the principals in each building, while informed, are not involved in any of the special needs students programs. Perhaps some involvement in the special education process by the principals would provide much needed relief to the Director of Special Education.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU-WIDE

COMMENDATIONS:

- A philosophy of inclusion and of least restrictive environment is evident in each building.
- Staff, including paraprofessionals, are dedicated and qualified.
- Staff provide timely reports and paperwork that include narratives.
- There is maximum use of technology, particularly for communication.
- The district is commended for hiring a school social worker.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Citations are listed by individually.

SUGGESTIONS:

There are no SAU-wide suggestions. See individual reports for building suggestions.

Bow Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Dev. Disabilities 2) Intergraded Preschool
 3) Modified Regular 4) Resource Room

OF FILES REVIEWED: 4 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school provides an excellent quality of services to students.
- All students with disabilities are fully included in regular education programs and have access to the general curriculum with support and modifications when necessary.
- Regular Education staff are flexible, supportive and accommodating.
- The school has an excellent relationship with parents.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.01 (h) 1 file: the number of school days for a preschooler was indicated as 180 days without disclosing attending 2 days per week.

Ed. 1109.01 (n) 2 files: LEA representative was not indicated on some IEP's and evaluations.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The current levels of performance could be included on the IEP page with the corresponding goal and objectives.
- The district may want to look at increasing space for services and increasing budgeting for supplies.
- An assistant to the Special Education Director or building coordinators might eliminate the additional burden on special education staff (i.e. setting meetings, filing, etc.).

Bow Memorial School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Self-contained

OF FILES REVIEWED: 4 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are highly competent and dedicated to the needs of all students.
- Special and regular education staff collaborate at the highest levels and have respect for each other.
- The use of the email system is an outstanding tool that allows all staff to communicate with each other and with parents, on a regular basis.
- Parents are actively involved in the special education process and feel that staff are creative, imaginative and competent.
- Case managers are available and helpful to parents to facilitate the team process.
- The addition of a social worker is a wonderful component that can be accessed by families of special education students and staff for a variety of Home-School community services/programs.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed.1119.06 Special Education staff have inadequate space to provide direct service in a confidential setting.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider creation of a 5-6 and a 7-8 resource room for direct student instruction. This would provide a place for materials to be stored and utilized, and for students to be assisted in a confidential setting.
- Building-level administration may need to take a more active role in the Core team meetings.
- The position of Special Education Director appears to have many components and responsibilities. Consider delegating some of the LEA responsibilities to building level administrators.
- If services are being provided as a “Related service”, appropriate goals should be noted in the IEP (such as school counseling) to clearly indicate the objectives/process of these goals/services.

Bow Memorial School, Continued

- Staff work long hours to ensure paperwork is complete and parent meetings are held. The district needs to review the number of hours that professional staff and paraprofessionals are working to ensure that staff is working a reasonable schedule.
- The district may wish to develop a plan of action to better inform the community of the wonderful support and programming that students are involved with and the outstanding caliber of the staff.
- The program servicing cognitively impaired students at the middle school would be effective with a strong life skills and pre-vocational components. The teacher is moving the program in this direction but will need financial support from the district to continue this progressive and innovative programming.

Bow High School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Bridges Program 2) Reading 3) Academic Support
4) “For Today” & “Everyday”

OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are proud of resources they provide to all students in a non-threatening atmosphere.
- There is much collaboration and enthusiasm among all staff.
- Staff are flexible and willing to assist as needed.
- The inclusionary practices within the school are commendable.
- The students of Bow High School are commended for their politeness, helpfulness and respect.
- The administrator spoke very highly of both staff and students.
- Staff were commendable of the technology support provided.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.04 1 file: purpose of meeting was not indicated on meeting notice.

CFR300.300 1 file: IEP indicates vocational placement at Concord High School. Parent interview indicated child no longer attending that program. No paperwork to indicate change found.

CFR300.345 (b) 2 files: lacked evidence that student was invited to meeting.

CFR300.543 (b) 1 file: no signature of classroom teacher on report summary for LD code.

CFR300.437 (a) 1 file: frequency and location of service not indicated, especially amount of time for academic support.

CFR300.444 1 file: lacked indication of placement information or parent consent
1 file: lacked indication of evaluation planning for three-year re-evaluation.

SUGGESTIONS:

- A larger workspace for academic support service teachers is recommended.
- Consider improving technology with new or stable computer systems.

OUT OF DISTRICT FILES

OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 111.01 There was no evidence in one out-of-district file that Extended School Year has been considered or that the student had the opportunity to participate in physical education.

SUGGESTIONS:

None

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 67

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

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NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 0

There are currently no James O students in the Bow School District.